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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 000376

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV; INL/AAE

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TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [VM](#) [CNARC](#)

SUBJECT: TAIWAN-VIETNAM DRUG COOPERATION

REF: A. Hanoi 117 B. Hanoi 362

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The drug connection between Vietnam and Taiwan is a "chronic, but not large" problem." A large heroin seizure in Taiwan last May was "unprecedented." Relations between the Taiwan Ministry of Justice/Investigative Bureau (MOJ) liaison officer based in Ho Chi Minh City and his GVN counterparts are "good," but cooperation is limited. There is no apparent connection between growing tourism and marriage links and drugs. END SUMMARY.

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DRUG CONNECTION - IT'S THERE  
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2. (SBU) Taiwan Economic and Cultural Office Special Assistant Chiang Tsung Cheng told poloff on February 13 that while there was "definitely" a drug connection between Vietnam and Taiwan, the problem was "much less serious than the one we have with the PRC." (Note: Despite Chiang's official title, he said that he was actually from the Taiwan MOJ/Investigative Bureau liaison. While based in Ho Chi Minh City, Chiang spends a "few days" in Hanoi about every two months. End note.) Chiang called the seizure of 60 kilograms of heroin in Kaohsiung Harbor coming from Vietnam last May "significant." However, he noted that it was "not that large" compared to a 200 kilogram heroin seizure in 2000 that Taiwan authorities traced back to the PRC. Taiwan authorities viewed the seizure from Vietnam as "very unusual - really unprecedented," he asserted. Taiwan was also increasingly concerned about heroin shipped directly from Cambodia to Taiwan, Chiang added.

3. (SBU) Chiang said that there was a "slow, but steady" trickle of heroin coming into Taiwan from Vietnam. He noted that the heroin does not transit Taiwan; rather, it is consumed locally. While he declined to estimate how much heroin entered Taiwan from Vietnam or how much was seized, Chiang said that Taiwan law enforcement authorities were "quite certain" that the heroin originated in the Golden Triangle, transited Vietnam, and made its way to Taiwan either via sea or sometimes via air couriers.

4. (SBU) Note: DEA's Hanoi country office views the Taiwan connection more seriously than Chiang, noting that Taiwanese nationals organized the only clandestine lab ever seized in Vietnam. In addition, DEA regional investigations suggest that Taiwanese groups are involved in significant drug trafficking in and through Vietnam. End note

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LIMITED COOPERATION  
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5. (SBU) Chiang said that while relations with counterpart GVN law enforcement authorities were "good," there had been little genuine cooperation on the Vietnamese side. Without going into specifics, Chiang said that over the past 16 months, he had provided "good information quite a few times" to counterparts, but he claimed to have "no idea" what, if anything, they did with it. He added that he had "never received feedback" from GVN law enforcement authorities on what, if any, results had been achieved with information he passed to them.

6. (SBU) Chiang said that when he did have information worth passing along, he was "reluctant" to pass it to the counternarcotics police; he said that he preferred to either work through Interpol or the Standing Office of Drug Control because "relations are better with those offices." However, Chiang added that, whenever possible, he most preferred to provide actionable information back to Taiwan authorities, whom he trusts to follow through, make an arrest and/or seizure, and give him a full and accurate accounting. "In general, our policy is to make arrests in Taiwan," he added. During his tenure, he has not attempted to engage GVN law enforcement authorities in any joint investigations.

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TOURISM AND MARRIAGE HAVE LITTLE IMPACT  
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17. (SBU) In recent years there has been a major surge in tourism from Taiwan as well as in marriages of Vietnamese women to Taiwanese men (ref b). Chiang said that authorities had not seen any significant increase in the drug trade despite the growing amount of "people traffic" between Vietnam and Taiwan. Chiang added that there had not been any "documented cases" of marriages leading to drug connections or smuggling.

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COMMENT  
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18. (SBU) Chiang's comments regarding law enforcement cooperation were much in line with what those of other foreign law enforcement liaison officers based in Vietnam, including DEA (ref a). The Taiwan official's experience confirms our assessment that the lack of Ministry of Public Security cooperation with DEA is not directed only at the USG; others are also frustrated in their efforts to engage the GVN in meaningful law enforcement cooperation.  
BURGHARDT